

# Mayors of Growing Nebraska Cities

## Men Chosen at Late Election to Direct Business Affairs of Bustling Communities During the Year



THOMAS WOLF — DAVID CITY

C.W. MCCONOUGHY — HOLDREGE

F.D. SHARRAR — WEST POINT

W.R. WILLIAMS — BLAIR

DR. H.J. MCBETH — OSCEOLA

NEBRASKA cities are no laggards in the march of public improvements. On the contrary, they are well up in the race for civic beauty and municipal betterment.

A few years ago the man would have been regarded with suspicion who proposed to pave the streets of a Nebraska city of the ordinary class. Sewers were unknown, sidewalks were dilapidated, oil lamps were used to make a bluff at lighting the public thoroughfares; and to hold things level and avoid debt was the great desideratum that made city officials popular.

Today this is all changed. Many years of continuing prosperity, greatly increased land values, the influx of settlers to the country and of ambitious people to the towns—the all-round demand for the best of everything—has stirred to action a spirit that did but lie dormant during the lean years when inspired statesmen were setting the country by the ears over the rainbow-like promises of panaceas that did not pass.

Having come into their own in the practical advantages of life, the people of Nebraska shortly became of one mind in the determination to make their municipalities more pleasant places in which to live. The larger cities set the example, the next in size followed suit; and today even the larger villages are bursting into the line of progress with a pride and a vim that is forcing the scales from the eyes of the old fogies, very few in number, who may be, here and there, seeking to curb advancement.

The desire for more satisfactory living has spread far into the country, until in the older counties it has become the usual thing for pretentious names to be given to fine farm homes; and their owners are making the surroundings justify the poetical, fanciful or old world appellations they have attached to their farmsteads.

Today it is not the fashion for the rulers of Nebraska cities to preach a pinching economy, so much as a wise expenditure of all the money necessary to make their municipalities blossom forth in modern panoply of up-to-date conveniences, trimmed with some of the luxuries. Better buildings, for one thing, needed more appropriate settings, whether they were owned by the public or the citizens individually. To provide this appropriate setting involved improved streets. That town which became most attractive to farmers and transients went ahead in material things. Neighboring towns discovered this patent fact without much delay, and they in turn sent to the front as municipal officials those men who proved themselves to have capacity and a grasp of modern forward movements.

A majority of the Nebraska cities of the second class have municipally owned water works or lighting plants, or both. In nearly every instance the plants are managed with ability and faithfulness, and with profit to the city treasury, at the same time satisfactory service is furnished the patrons. Some of these municipal plants are quite pretentious, and in nearly every instance the plans have been so drawn that extensions may be made from time to time, as the demand increases.

On January 26 last a good push ahead was given the movement for improved city conditions when the League of Nebraska Municipalities was organized at Lincoln. The initial convention was attended by nearly one hundred delegates from various cities and towns in the state. The delegates represented not only the cities as such, but a good many commercial clubs sent delegates to learn what is being done by their neighbors. A permanent organization was formed and standing committees appointed to give attention to various features of city government, from accounting to street cleaning. Among the matters to which the committees will give some study before the next meeting are:

- Legislation, C. J. Miles, Hastings, chairman.
- Street paving, George L. Campen, Omaha, chairman.
- Street lighting, James Nicholson, Jr., Grand Island, chairman.
- Sewerage and sanitation, Adna R. Dodson, Lincoln, chairman.
- Water works, John Martz, Seward, chairman.
- Taxation and assessment, W. L. Kirkpatrick, York, chairman.
- Municipal franchises, A. G. Edlund, Axtell, chairman.
- Municipal accounting, Henry Schuff, Grand Island, chairman.
- Parks and playgrounds, W. E. Hardy, Lincoln, chairman.
- Public health, Dr. George F. Shidder, York, chairman.
- Membership, Robert P. Starr, Loup City, chairman.
- Public safety, Mayor Dahlman, Omaha, chairman.
- Judicial opinions, E. J. Clements, Ord, chairman.

During the sessions of the first gathering of representatives of Nebraska municipalities the discussions were lively and covered the whole range of civic government, from direct legislation to woman suffrage. It was learned through Frank G. Pierce, secretary of the League of Iowa Municipalities, that the Hawkeye organization is the largest of its kind in the country confined to one state, with California second. Mr. Pierce pointed out the great benefits that have accrued to the towns of his state through the league, which last year had an income of \$1,200 from memberships. Individuals are not admitted as members, nor will they be taken as members in Nebraska. Only municipalities can join, and the fees range from \$50 a year for Omaha and \$40 for Lincoln, down to \$5 for the smaller places. The membership is \$5 for all alike.

The officers of the Nebraska league are: President, Don Love,

Lincoln; vice president, C. J. Miles, Hastings; secretary-treasurer, R. C. Ozman, Lincoln; trustees, Ed Lemkuhl of Wahoo, John H. Morgan of Chadron, C. O. Lobeck of Omaha.

Laws to be sought by the league, through the legislature, will be decided on at a meeting to be held some time the coming fall. They will relate, probably, to a greater extension of the power of municipalities in the first place, such as the privilege of making their own charters, uniform system of accounting and matters of that kind.

The formation of this state league is but another impetus to a policy of advancement already well under way in Nebraska. Not a town of 2,500 people or more but has been putting on a better dress in public affairs, while the cities of 5,000 or better have installed not only electric light and water plants, but have also gone in for concrete walks and paving. Fences have been abolished on the main residence streets, and where pavements are not laid in the business sections macadam has been put down. Wide gutters are also placed along the main streets, thus abolishing the stinkholes in which filth and flies were wont to accumulate while the farmers' teams stood knee-deep in mud, even in dry weather.

Fremont is a typical city, favored with good officers and pushing ahead at all times. Mayor Fred Burrell is a civil engineer, superintendent of bridges for the Northwestern road, who brings to his civic duties the same faithfulness and attention to detail in his own business. Equipped with water works, electric light plant and sewers, Fremont is now turning its attention to more paving, and shortly will present as fine a front in this respect as any city of similar size in the country.

Grand Island put in 40,000 yards of new paving last year, and will lay a great deal more the present season. Hastings is also in the paving business just now, to keep pace with the better buildings going up every year. Not only the main streets where the stores are located are being paved in cities like these, but every year the paved area is spreading out to comprise the principal residence streets.

What is true of Fremont, Grand Island and Hastings is also true



COL. WELLINGTON HARTFORD — TEKAMAH

D.R. ROCKWELL — BROKEN BOW

CHAS. A. TRACY — BENSON

GEO. MERRIAM — SEWARD



H. J. ANDERS — TECUMSEH

G.E. SCHILLER — CENTRAL CITY

W.L. DOWLING — MADISON



F. STUCKER — FLORENCE

P.J. TRAINOR — SO. OMAHA

Both of efficiency and economy and also in the very essential element of material betterment. Our municipal officers are, as a rule, fair representatives of the business force in their communities, and with less interference by the legislature on local affairs will come the opportunity to make all the towns of Nebraska as beautiful and as desirable for residence as any in the country. The start has been made everywhere and all we have to do now is to stir a spirit of emulation that will demand the best.

The men who were recently elected to be the executive officers of their respective towns in Nebraska are chosen because of their energy and ability, and because their fellow townsmen expect them to make good. It is to be another year of growth in Nebraska; the people of the state are prosperous.

### Freedom of the City of London

THE honorable freedom of the city, which is to be conferred on ex-President Roosevelt shortly, is the highest gift that the city of London has in its power to bestow. It was recently bestowed on Miss Florence Nightingale, the only woman who has ever received it.

The wall of the anteroom of the council chamber is lined with the busts of those whom the city has honored in this way.

In conferring the honorary freedom the ancient forms are still preserved. Six citizens will vouch for Mr. Roosevelt's worthiness in the following terms:

"That Theodore Roosevelt is a man of good name and fame; that he does not desire the freedom of the city whereby to defraud the king or this city of any of their rights, customs or advantages; but that he will pay his scot and bear his lot; and so they all say." These six citizens are called "the compurgators."

The city chamberlain addresses the distinguished visitor, enlarging on the deeds that make him worthy of the honor that is being bestowed. Mr. Roosevelt will then reply.

The city chamberlain then offers him the right hand of fellowship and presents him with a gold box, homelike decorated, containing an illuminated copy of the code of the Common Council, by which it was resolved that he should be presented with the freedom. In the case of a soldier a sword is sometimes given instead of a box. The box usually costs a hundred guineas.

If Mr. Roosevelt were British he would then have to sign the following declaration:

"I do solemnly decide that I will be good and true to our sovereign lord the king; that I will be obedient to the mayor of this city; that I will maintain the franchises and customs thereof and will keep this city harmless in that which in me is; that I will also keep the king's peace in my own person, that I will know no consociates made against the king's peace, but I will warn the mayor thereof, or hinder it to my power, and that all these points and articles I will well and truly keep, according to the laws and customs of this city, to my power."

But not being a subject of the king, he will, of course, not be asked to sign this declaration. So jealously, indeed, does the city prize its rights of presenting the freedom that, though it has several times been presented to distinguished foreigners, the gift in such cases is only nominal.

Garibaldi, the great Italian soldier, and De Lesseps, who made the Suez canal, have both been voted the freedom. But in each case, strange as it may seem, they did not get it! The document received in such cases is only a copy of the vote of the Common Council, not an actual resolution conferring the freedom. And in the chamberlain's books it is not recorded that they did receive the freedom.

So that Mr. Roosevelt will be only nominally a freeman. No record of the reception of the freedom will be found in the chamberlain's books.

There are several other ways by which an Englishman may obtain the freedom. You may get it by patrimony, by servitude or by redemption. You may be admitted as a freeman because your father was a freeman, or because you have served your term as apprentice to a freeman, or you may buy it for cash down.

In each of these cases you pay a guinea fee, which goes to the Freeman's Orphan school. If you are neither a ratepayer of the city, nor have a Parliamentary vote here, however, you pay £2 6s 8d.

Many posts in the city can only be held by freemen, especially those in the gift of the great guilds and livery companies.

Foreign sovereigns do not get even the nominal freedom when the city wishes to honor them. They receive only a complimentary address. Queen Victoria on her accession only got a complimentary address, as she was only entitled to the freedom by patrimony.

King Edward is similarly a freeman by patrimony, or because his father was a freeman. When Mr. Gladstone was prime minister it was found impossible to vote him the freedom, as he was already a freeman by redemption.

Between the freedom by patrimony, servitude or redemption and the honorary freedom there is, of course, a wide gulf.—Pearson's Weekly.

York, Seward, Norfolk, Beatrice, Plattsmouth, Nebraska City, Falls City, Crete, Kearney, Alliance, Aurora, Columbus, Holdrege and other progressive towns, in greater or lesser degree. Where no paving is yet done, it is largely because the sewer systems have not yet been completed. Some are finished, some have been started and others are planned for. Paving follows, whether it be macadam or brick, and every year sees the area of improvement extended.

Brick is the pavement so far tried in the cities of Nebraska outside of Omaha and Lincoln. In some towns, like Beatrice, for instance, native brick has been put down, with considerable satisfaction where carefully laid.

But as a rule Purlington block is the material used.

A gentleman from another state, who recently made a trip through western Nebraska, expressed his surprise at finding the towns so well improved. He mentioned particularly the little city of Scott's Bluff. "They have out there," he said, "as fine sidewalks and crosswalks of concrete as one can find anywhere. In Alliance and Chadron and other towns we saw the same spirit of progress, but Scott's Bluff appealed to me because it is so recent in construction, as a town, and in what we used to consider the desert country. No finer homes or more presentable streets will be found in any eastern or coast town in the country. And in the other places mentioned we saw stretches of residence streets that were a delight to the eye. It was amazing to a visitor seeing your newer towns for the first time."

Harking back now to the League of Nebraska Municipalities and what it expects to accomplish, City Comptroller Lobeck says there is really no limit to its field of usefulness. "The Iowa and California leagues have been on the order of college extension in the education of municipal officials," said Mr. Lobeck. "Our officials rotate in office more than in any other country, and necessarily it follows that anything which makes all the citizenship alert to the best, acquainted with most recent developments, is a good thing for the city or town. By extending the league and making its influence co-extensive with the lines of the state, we hope to arouse an interest that will result in better municipal government, from the standpoint Weekly.